Office consultations were held between the two countries on 23-24th October. During the meetings all bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest were discussed by the two sides.

Both sides agreed to cooperate in preventing countering and suppressing the activities of terrorist groups and to ensuring that their common border remains one of peace, stability and tranquility. The two sides shared the view that the United Nations reform process should be expedited. Myanmar informed the Indian side of its willingness to support the aspiration of India to become a Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council when the issue comes up. The two sides agreed to work jointly to strengthen regional cooperation, including in ASEAN, the BliyST-EC and the Mekong -Ganga Cooperation, in which both countries are actively involved. Agreements were signed on visa exemption for official and diplomatic passport holders and in the field of educational exchanges. The Government of India also extended a Credit Line of US dollars 25 million to Myanmar, for which a bilateral agreement was signed.

Supply of weapons to Pakistan by North Korea

1781. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Pakistan has admitted to buying strategic surface to surface missiles from North Korea;

(b) whether Pakistan has also declared that it would match India's build up of arms and weapons system to maintain the balance of power; and

(c) if so, Government's views on this arms race and its implications on our development programme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Pakistan President Musharraf is reported to have said in a news conference in Seoul on November 7,2003, that Pakistan had purchased conventional short range missiles from North Korea. He further added "we have purchased these missiles from North Korea. We have also had a transfer of technology of these missiles. We now manufacture ourselves these missiles."

(b) and (c) Pakistani statement which reveal its determination to pursue military parity with India are not new. India is not engaged in any arms race. The Government at the same time remains committed to taking all necessary steps to effectively safeguard India's security based on a realistic assessment of the country's security environment.

Handing over of twenty criminals to India by Pakistan

1782. DR. ABRAR AHMED: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any fresh attempt has been made by Government to Pakistan for handing over of twenty most wanted persons to India; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) India had asked Pakistan several times to apprehend and hand over the 20 fugitives from Indian law. Most recently, in the context of Dawood Ibrahim being placed by the United Nations Security Council Al Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee on its consolidated list established pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1267, the matter was once again brought to Pakistan's attention.

Increase in staff strength of Indian and Pakistani High Commission

†1783. SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Pakistan have recently increased the number of staff in their High Commissions;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the total number of existing staff after increasing their strength in the High Commissions of both the countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (c) In continuation of Prime

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.